

A

Jolly. 1806.

SERMON

Preach'd *August* the 4th 1700.

On *Pfalm* cxlvi. vers. 3, 4, 5.

O put not your trust in Princes, nor in any Child of Man, for there is no help in them.

For when the breath of man goeth forth, he shall turn again to his earth; and then all his thoughts perish.

Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God.

By *W. Fleetwood*, Chaplain in Ordinary
to His Majesty.

L O N D O N:

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WE know not who it was that compos'd this *Psalm* nor what it was that occasion'd it. But the Providence of God furnisheth all People with occasions more than enough, of applying these words to themselves, but too too pertinently. It hath furnished us, with one, not many years ago, so very proper that it gives fresh and lively pain, to every one that remembers it, with half the Consideration it deserves. It furnishes us now with another, of which no living Man, perhaps, can see the Consequence at full, but every one can see enough to drive him to Sorrow and Amazement, and cause him to say, with the Psalmist, *The Lord is King, the Earth may be glad thereof; yea the multitude of the Isles may be glad thereof: glad, that their Affairs are in the hands of him, who has all Power; and is all Wisdom, and all Goodness; who bringeth Light out of Darkness, Good out of Evil, and can turn every thing to their Advantage who serve him truly.*

Whether it were, that the Psalmist here directs himself, against the common inclination of Men, which is, to build great hopes upon the Promises of Princes and Great Men, and rather to depend on them, than on God above, who keepeth his Promise for ever; or whether the Death of some Great Prince, had given the Jews

in their Captivity, some mighty disappointment; whatever it was that occasion'd the composing of this Psalm, 'tis plain the words of the Text advise us, First, Not to put our trust *in Princes, nor any Child of Man*: And that for this Reason, *There is no help in them, because when the breath of Man goeth forth, he shall turn again to his Earth, and all his thoughts perish*. Secondly, they direct us where we are to place our Trust and Confidence, and that is in God; *Blessed is he that bath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God*. 1. Of the Persons in whom we are not to place our trust and confidence, and they are Princes: *Put not your Trust in Princes, i. e. in no body, no Child of Man*; for if you might in any body you might in them, because they have most power, and more opportunities, of answering to your Confidence, than any Men besides. I see no reason to think that any thing is here said to the Disparagement of Princes, as tho' they were to be trusted less than other Men, for Falshood or Forgetfulness of Promises: And therefore to trust, is not here put for believing: But they are rather here consider'd, as the faithfullest, as well as the most powerful managers of human Affairs, of the best intentions, as well as greatest abilities, both to design and execute great matters; and yet, not to be entirely depended on, for other Reasons. 'Tis much the same that is express'd in Ps. cxviii. 8, 9. *It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in Man. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in Princes, i. e. the chiefest and the best of Men*: And the reason here assign'd, why they are not so to be trusted and depended on, namely, because they are so subject to Death, delivers them from all suspicion of blame; to put our trust therefore in Princes, does in this place signifie, to think the settlement of their Affairs so strong and sure, that nothing can disturb them; to trust so to the Wisdom of their Management, their Valour, and their might, their good Intentions, and their great Abilities, as to be quite secure, and to suspect no Change can happen; it

either signifies this Confidence, which is innocent, tho' inconsiderate ; or this Confidence with Impiety, trusting in the Arm of Flesh alone, and vaunting with the foolish Man, who saith in his Heart, *tush, I shall never be moved, no harm shall happen to me.* If the Trust that is here dissuaded from, be contrary to, or exclusive of that Trust we always ought to put in God, then to be sure it is condemn'd and sinful ; but if it be only a weak and groundless Trust, then there is less Offence than Folly in it, and the heavy Disappointments it must needs meet, will punish it sufficiently. Sometimes we see a Prince truly noble, just and merciful, wise and brave, a Father of his Country, a lover of his People, careful of all their Interests and their Honour, and born as it were, to the good of Mankind : It would be impossible not to put great Confidence in such a Prince, and to hope a Nation will be happy under such Administration, whilst he lives ; this sort of Trust is reasonable, because 'tis built upon so good ground. Another time we see a Prince of beauteous Aspect, lovely Disposition, inclin'd to Learning, Virtue, Piety, and full of all good Qualities ; it would be stupidity not to hope well of him, and to promise our selves a Harvest answerable to a Field of so fair a shew ; such Hope and Confidence as this, becomes us, as we are reasonable and considering Creatures, and it would be a kind of Ingratitude to God, from whom we acknowledge all these Gifts and Graces come, not to conceive such hopes as such excellent Endowments promise : A Man must shut his Eyes on Providence, that will not make his Observations on what passes, and collect what is most reasonable and likely. For since God acts by reasonable Causes, and procures our Peace and Happiness by Instruments that are in Nature proper for that purpose, we owe it to him, to expect it from them, where they are so promising. This is properly to trust in God ; for to look for *Grapes from Thorns, or Figs from Thistles,* is to hope against Nature, and against Reason,
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and not to be excused by any Reverence we pretend to God, or dependance on his Power, tho' he is truly able to produce thole Fruits from those unnatural Stocks. The Men of no Religion, and no Thought, are so intent upon these second Causes, that they see no first, nor will acknowledge any Supream Power, that over-looks and governs our Affairs, but governs them by Nature and by Reason : But they who trust to one, still in Subordination to the other, in constant dependence on him, and always in his power to change and suspend, as he thinks fit, do truly put their Trust in God, even when they put their trust in Princes. They look for rest and for Security in Peace, where Kings are virtuous, wise and watchful, and the People are at Unity ; for Victory in War, where Generals are brave and wary, the Soldiers healthy, numerous, obedient and couragious, and well paid, *i. e.* they promise to themselves the natural effects of Wisdom, Strength and Concord ; but all from God, who is to bless these natural and these moral Causes. They look for plenteous Harvests, where the Fields are full and flourishing, but know, 'tis God that made them so, and he that is to bring them in. This Confidence he does himself raise in us, and therefore never is offended with it, because 'tis built upon the Confidence we have, that he will suffer things to go on orderly and naturally, unless we provoke him to change or suspend the common course of them. And tho' our disappointments are very great and very many, yet might our hopes and expectations be very reasonable, and just, and are not to be condemned, by an unhappy issue. If our trust in Princes, exclude not our trust in God, we need not be afraid it will be faulty. Nor does the Psalmist here condemn such trust, for its Impiety, but rather (for the avoiding troublesome and heavy Disappointments) would dissuade us from putting so much trust in Princes, whose Lives are so uncertain, and to look up to God more ardently and frequently, whose Mercy and Goodness, like himself)

(they are himself) endure for ever. I think, it is a kind Advice, not to raise in our minds, hopes that are so easily defeated, and when defeated, so vexatious and afflicting. *Put not your trust in Princes, nor in any Child of Man, for there is no help in them.* There is no help in Man, in many cases; a thousand and ten thousand evils befall us, wherein the wisdom, Skill, the Riches, and the Strength of all Mankind, can give no Help, afford no Comfort. If we want Rain, or have too much of it, Can all the World procure a Shower, or hinder it from falling? Can it procure a favourable Wind, or hinder a contrary one from blowing? Can it recover Health where it is wanting, to the good of thousands; or restore a precious Life, that is, like *David's*, worth ten thousand? The utmost of humane Power, for ought that appears, is but an ability of doing huge Mischief; and the best of it is, an ability of hindring one another from doing Mischief. But when we want Assistance in most of our Extremities, Oh how unable is this World to give it! The Wisest, Richest, and most powerful Men want help themselves, and neither can afford it to themselves, nor others; there is indeed no help in them, *For when the Breath of Man goeth forth, he shall return again to his Earth, and then all his thoughts perish.* The very best is here supposed of the very ablest of them, that they may be full of good intentions, form great and good Designs, have their Hearts wholly bent, on honouring God, promoting Virtue, and profiting Mankind, seeking the Interest of their People, doing Justice, shewing Mercy, and imitating him, whose Ministers and Substitutes they are. Happy for them, that they are full of these Designs! no better thoughts can possibly possess their hearts, or employ their Hours; the King of Kings, the mighty Master of them all, shall bless them, and reward them, whom he finds so doing. But this is much too often all they do; they form a multitude of brave Designs, and live to effect but few! *I have said ye are Gods, but ye shall die like Men,* and this they find, and we find
also

also. Poor Princes, poor People ! they raise our hopes, and they destroy them suddenly. We gather up all our trust, and place it on their Lives, and in a day or two, those Lives are spilt like Water on the Ground. They are, as the Prophet calls them *the breath of our Nostrils* : And Nations sometimes seem to live in them, and only to breath their breath ; and yet *their breath goeth forth*, like other Peoples breath. *and they return again to their Earth*, (their Earth as well as ours) *and all their thoughts perish*, and all our thoughts too, with them : But not our thoughtfulness, that still survives, to trouble every wise considering Man. Our thoughts are in this place our hopes, and they expire with the breath of him who kindled them. His thoughts, who rais'd our thoughts perish, and therefore ours must perish with them. Who can enough esteem those Lives, which by Experience are found so useful to the World, to the securing its tranquility and happiness ; or those who from their earliest Infancy, have promised all the good that Men can look for, from the most virtuous towardly disposition, and whose precocious advances could not fail of giving us some jealous Fears, with our most lively hopes ! Who can enough esteem such lives, if we consider these fine qualities and who can value them too little, or trust too little in them, who considers how soon *their breath goeth forth, and they return again to Earth, and all their thoughts perish* ! What must we do in this uncertainty ? Our Affairs require a life as durable as Brass, and the Laws of our Mortality will admit of none, but what is subject to a thousand certain, and a thousand accidental evils, each of which may break us all to pieces. Let us do any thing in this uncertainty, but blame the Providence of God, who hangs the good of so much People, on so small a thread : For Righteous are his ways, and Just his Government, whatever we may fear, whatever we endure.

But may I not, unblam'd, say with the Prophet, *Jerem. 12. 1.* (I know I say it with all deference and humility) *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee,*

thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments? When thou in mercy turnedst away the Captivity of our Zion, we were like them that dream; when our Enemies were just upon us, they stumbled and fell; then was our mouth fill'd with laughter, and our tongue with joy. The greatest Enemies we had, could not forbear proclaiming, The Lord hath done great things for them. We could not our selves in Gratitude forbear proclaiming, The Lord hath done great things for us already, whereof we re-joyce.

Either to temper these Felicities, or punish our Ingratitude, Thou stopp'dst up for ever, the Breath of our Nostrils; *The anointed of the Lord was taken away from us, of whom we said, under her shadow, we shall live (not among the Heathen at home) in plenty and security.*

To shew thou didst intend but to correct, and not to give us unto Death, thou didst by unexpected Instruments, deliver the Life of the King from fear of the Enemy, and from the Snare of the Hunter; thou sav'dst him from Destruction, and crown'dst him with Mercy and Loving Kindness; and mad'st him instrumental in procuring the desire of all our Hearts, an honourable Peace; the Opportunity of healing all our Wounds, recovering all our Losses, and making up the Breaches of an intestine Foes, our foolish Discords, and ill-grounded Animosities had occasion'd; the opportunity of settling our Affairs, and looking to the ground we stood upon; of putting them in such a posture, that neither Enemies abroad, nor Enemies at home might give us any great Disturbance; that the Religion of our Country, and its most ancient, properest, and best tempered Government, might be secur'd, against the Attempts and Machinations of its old inveterate Enemies, the Sons of Violence and Darkness, and from the noisy Importunities of unexperienc'd, raw, new-fangled Schematists, and Speculators. But contrary to this, the Spirit of Discord is gone out among us, and the sweet hope of all the Kingdom, is in a moment, snatch-
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ed away from us ; e'er we had time to try to move thee by our Prayers, or time to apprehend a Stroke so painful and so mortal. Thy former Favours did not promise such Conclusion. But we will hold our Peace, since 'tis thy doing ; We are much surer that thou may'st in Justice thus chastise us for our Sins, than we could be that thou hadst so much Mercy for such Sinners, as we have, all our Lives, experienced from thee. Permit us never so long, to talk with thee of thy Judgments, yet must we still conclude, *Righteous art thou O Lord, when we plead with thee.*

Such Losses, and such heavy Disappointments, needs must prove effectual Cures of all our Confidence in Princes. Never were hopes more justly rais'd, nor plac'd more reasonably than ours have been, upon two Noble Objects ; and yet Six years have quite defeated them, dried up our Springs, and almost desolated a Royal Tribe, one of the fairest and most fruitful in the World. How short is our Prospect now ! in what a little Compass is our Kingly Family contain'd ! Two precious Lives make up our whole Treasure !

The People of the East, we find in Scriptures, addressed to their Princes, with—*O King, Live for ever.* 'Tis a vain Complement to Men of Flesh and Blood, whose Breath goeth forth so suddenly, who die like other Men, who return again to their Earth, and whose Thoughts all perish in a moment ; but if 'twere ever reasonable, our Case would call for it, and we would use it. May God enlarge these Borders ! build to these Princes a sure House ! and bind up their Souls in the Bundle of Life ! a long one here for our sakes, and for their own an Everlasting one in Heaven !

II. Let us now withdraw from this uncomfortable side. The Lives of Princes, are it seems, like Lands of Darkness, where, every step we make, is in Distrust and Fear : They give us little but Alarms, Defeats and Disappointments. Let us seek a Country of more light and Safety, where hope dwells, and where we may abide

bide with Confidence. *Blessed is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God. This is a Life, and Will, and Power, we may depend upon; Great is the Lord, and marvellous, worthy to be praised, there is no end of his Greatness. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. His kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all ages.*

These are foundations strong enough for all the trust & confidence a Heart can hold. He is of infinite Goodness to intend the happiness of all his Creatures, of infinite Wisdom to know wherein it lies, and of infinite Power to effect his wise and good designs towards us. Here, therefore, we may place our Trust, without any fears of Disappointment; here we must fix our Hopes, for here we can only find our Help.

Were there not such a Power above, to overlook and govern Men, and their Affairs, what a place of Misery and Confusion would this World be? what with the certainty of natural Causes, working many sad effects, tho' known before, yet unavoidable; what with the Multitude of fearful Accidents, never to be prevented nor foreseen; what with the Folly, Ignorance, Mistakes, the Malice and perverseness, and the Rage of one anothers Passions, how wretched a thing would the Life of a Man be!

The ways of God, I think, are to permit natural Causes to work their natural Effects, according to the the Powers he hath endued them with; reserving to himself the Power of altering or suspending them, as he sees fit, and when he pleases; and to suffer Men to act as free Agents, having given them Reason, and reveal'd his Will to them, and laid down all sufficient Motives to restrain them from what they know is evil, and to encourage them to what is truly good; reserving to himself, however, the Power of changing their Inclinations, directing them in their Designs, and influencing them all, as he sees fit. By means, neither the certainty of natural operations, nor the freedom of Man's Will

Will, exclude his Government of Men and Nature, nor hinder us from addressing to him by Prayer, for what we want, and Praise for what we have receiv'd; both which would be in vain, were Nature not to be diverted from her way, nor the Will of man flexible, by some Superior over-ruling Power. Were Natures Course unalterably fixt, and the Will of Men not to be moved, Prayer would be insignificant and useless. Were not Men at liberty, in general, they could not be accountable for what they did, they could have neither Vice nor Vertue. Were not the Laws of nature fixt, we could not live in any sort of certainty, we cou'd not undertake any thing, nor could have any hope or expectation of succeeding. But as it pleases God to govern by these two known Rules, and to be still the Master of them both, there is all the room that can be for our Endeavours, Care and Vigilance, our Vertue and our Studies, and all the Reason and Grounds for our applying to him, our trusting in him, and dependence upon him. Our hope and Trust in God, must therefore be directed by these settled and established Rules of Providence. These are the known and standing Laws of his Wise Government; the rest is Dispensation, Favour, Grace and Favour, we may innocently hope for, pray for, and expect from his indulgent Goodness, where no establish'd Law of Nature is subverted; but for a Miracle, 'tis much more reasonable to wish for, than expect, one in our Favour. We know that nothing is impossible with God, but yet our Hope is never equal to his Power; nor do we ever trust in him for any thing uncommon, without some Promise in particular. We know it is as possible for God to restore again the Dead to Life, as Health to a Diseased Man; what is the Reason, then, that we do not importune him with our most earnest and united Prayers, to give us back that dear inestimable Life we have so lately parted with but that we think he signifies his Will and Pleasure to us, by the known stated Course of Nature, and know we have no reason to look for Miracles? Death would

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not give us such Despair immediately, but that we measure the Power of God, by the common Exercise of it in the World. And so 'tis with putting our trust in him, when we carry it no farther then he gives us leave, by his common Rules, or by particular Promise. When therefore the *Psalmist* would invite us *to hope in God, and put our trust in him*, he would not have us raise in our selves Expectations of things strangely unusual and unlikely ; nor to believe that God will do for us, or bring to pass, whatever we expect or wish for, or what we think we want. But we may hope, and trust in him for every thing, that is in it self reasonable, and fit for him to give, and for us to receive.

Our Passions often put us upon asking what, is not in it self very reasonable to expect ; no matter, provided it be nothing wicked and forbidden, and nothing to the Prejudice and Injury of any one else. Our Parents and our Friends live here, even beyond the common term of humane Life, and we yet desire of God, they may continue longer with us, and we may hope that he will hear our Prayers : This does not seem very reasonable, when we consider the Life of Man, and call to mind the years that are past, and observe how it has always been with other People : But yet 'tis very innocent and lawful so to do ; because we know of no set term of days, beyond which none shall pass ; that is still in the hands of God ; and because the protracting of that Life, is to us, we think of use, and to do no ones wrong.

The Child is dying there of a malignant Feaver, a Train as it were of liquid Fire, is running through its Veins, and burning up the Life, that has been the desire of I know not how many years past, and the hopes of I know not how many more to come ; the Parents pray to God in earnest, you may be sure, and put their trust in him, and hope he will extinguish this unnatural Flame ; and this they do, when Remedies are ineffectual, Physicians found of no value, and every

ry thing about them, bids them give it up for lost. The thing they ask is lawful, the time is not too late, the work is not impossible in Nature, and God is the Master of all. The Event alone could declare whether it were not fit for God to give this Life, or for the Parents to receive it. Their Confidence in God was well plac'd, altho' their Hopes and Desires were disappointed. If Reasons were to be sought for, in such cases, out of or beyond what natural Causes teach us, we may be sure that God denies us, with as much Reason as he gives us what we ask. We must not therefore think our hopes were wrong placed, and our confidence in God ill-grounded, and our prayers in vain, because we receive not what we ask so earnestly, because it is the power and Goodness of God, which justifies our hope and trust in him, and which encourages us to pray; and this his Power is not diminish'd by our Disappointment; nor is his Goodness the less, in his not granting what we thought (not He) convenient for us. It is impossible (as I have before said) to pray to God without believing him kind to intend our good, wise to discern what is our good and powerful to procure it. These are the very Reasons of Prayer, and the Motives of addressing to God, for what we think we want: And these are the Foundations of all our Hope and Confidence in him. And yet these are the very Reasons why our Prayers may not be heard, and our Hopes not answer'd, and yet God be still as merciful and good intention'd towards us, as when he grants our Requests. We suppose him good, to intend our Happiness, he may therefore be good in with-holding from us, what we think is good for us, but is not. We suppose him to be all wise, and therefore refer it to him to choose for us. How do we know he does not exercise his great Discernment, in refusing to us what we think is good for us, but what he knows is not? Shall we only think he judges right, when he judges as we judge, and measure out his Wisdom by our Affections
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and Desires? If we believe him wise enough to choose for us, the same Reason will shew him full as wise in his refusing what we ask of him; yes, and full as kind too, if we would believe that it is good for us to have, which he gives, and that not good (all things consider'd) which he withholds from us. But the Misfortune is, that we measure good by our own Affections, and Desires; that is good we think, which we seem to want and to set our Hearts upon, and nothing else can satisfy.

Let your Father be 70 years of Age, and your Child 7, the first a wise and virtuous Man, a Life that is necessary to you, and useful to the Common-wealth, and all that are about him; the other, as the rest of Children are, hopeful enough: If some Distemper put these two Lives into equal Danger, you will do what you can for both; and you will pray for them both, and trust in God for both their health and Safety: But both of them die, and Nature swallows up the Concern for the Parent, in the Grief for the Child; and because the bias of Affection is strongest on that side, our Hope and Confidence seem more defeated, and our Prayers, we think less heard, in the one Case than the other. 'Tis plain we consider not the usefulness of the aged Life (the continuance of which was certainly the greater good) in respect of the dearness of that little Life, which yet we could not tell what it might prove. These things shew us a little, that we are govern'd more by our Affections than our Reason; and that as they make us pray more earnestly, and hope more firmly, so they make our Disappointments much more heavy, and occasion us to think our Trust and Confidence in God were deceiv'd, when they were only not answer'd according to our Wishes. But wherein then stands the Blessedness of having God for our help, and hoping in the Lord our God, if he will only help us in the way of Nature, and we may only hope for what is reasonable and fit? why, this is as much as any Reasonable Man can look for, or desire. The utmost that a Reasona-

Reasonable Creature can hope for, is to be favoured and succeeded by God in all his Reasonable and Honest Undertakings, by means that are natural and common to him with all the World. 'Tis a great Support to the Mind of Man, to believe himself under the Protection of a Power, that is able and ready to secure him. whilst he is acting Reasonably and Honestly; able to continue on the Course of Nature, in its establish'd Settlement, by which Men live in good hope and expectation of Success; by which they plow and sow, and hope to reap and gather in their Harvest; by which they study, labour, venture out to Sea, and hope to gain the Fruits of each in its due Season; able to prevent a great many mischievous events; able to remove all hindrance and impediment in the course of Nature; able to influence Peoples Minds, by diverting them from enterprizing things that would do hurt to others; and by throwing little occasions in their way of doing good; and able, by a thousand and ten thousand little undiscernible means, to secure our happiness, and prevent our Misery; to turn the Accidents that look as if they would swallow us up in Ruin, into the means of our Security and preservation; to dissipate those Clouds of Misfortunes that are ready to burst upon our Heads and over-whelm us, and give us day again, with calm and safety. I can't tell how a Man can live in such a World as this, with any Joy, and that does not verily believe, and much depend upon the Providence of God; and that without expecting Miracles or Favours very much out of course, but only looking for such as are consistent with his known Rules of Government. What should we do without this everlasting Source of Comforts, this powerful Refuge under all Distresses? How many sore Calamities, publick as well as private, do we fall into, out of which no human Power or Wisdom can deliver us, nor shew us any way out of? And how must this perplex a Man, unless there were a Being above, kind and able, to have recourse

course to? Hope is the food and sustenance of the mind, and Men will live a great while upon it, and all the while much easier, tho' in misery; whereas the same afflictions would, without that hope, oppress them quite, and drive them to despair and madness; and this must often be the Case, were not the World, and Men, and their Affairs, all in the hands of God, and in his Government, who can do every thing beyond what we are able to ask or think. And who would part with such a sure Foundation of Trust, and Hope, and Confidence, that is not weary of his Life? Who would let go this Rock of Ages, for any thing else he can lay hold on in this World? Oh may we never be forsaken by him! yea, rather, may we never first forsake him? The Life of Princes is a Mole of Sand; all the Stability of human things is the stability of Wind and Water, changing their face, shifting their places every moment; God alone abideth for ever, God alone is worthy of our trust, and never will deceive it. 'Tis he alone who can extricate us out of all our Difficulties, wipe away all our Tears and Sorrows from our Hearts, deliver us from our Enemies, protract our Princes Lives, save us by few as well as many, give us no more occasions of Complaint and Lamentation, and turn even this to our advantage; give us the Spirit of Unity and Love of one another, of Wisdom to direct us in our publick Resolutions, and to improve under all the several Dispensations of his Providence. *Is any Rock like our God? Who is so great a God as our God? Be thou exalted Lord in thine own Strength, so will we sing and praise thy Power.*

F I N I S.